DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 638 FL 001 865

AUTHOR Lester, Kenneth A.
TITLE A Position on the Use of Scores in CEEB Achievement and Listening Comprehension Tests for Program Evaluation and Use of Published Norms.
PUB DATE Sep 69
NOTE 3p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.25
DESCRIPTORS Achievement Tests, College Admission, *College Entrance Examinations, *Course Evaluation, Educational Testing, Evaluation Criteria, *Language Instruction, *Modern Languages, Standards, Student Evaluation, Teacher Evaluation, *Test Interpretation, Tests, Test Validity

ABSTRACT

A strong stand against the use of College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) scores to evaluate high school language programs is developed in this position paper. Equally criticized is the practice of teacher evaluation based on analysis of student achievement as reflected in the scores. The mystery of determining the significance of percentile rank or "norm" tables to be used in the score interpretation of a particular test is dispelled in a discussion of how percentile ranks were developed. Concluding remarks bear on the issue of student evaluation in the light of ranking procedures used in the CEEB test. (RL)

ED040638

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

COORDINATORS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CONNECTICUT

A Position on the Use of Scores in CEEB Achievement and Listening Comprehension Tests for Program Evaluation and Use of Published Norms

Part I

The practice of using the scores which students earn on the various achievement tests of the College Entrance Examination Board to evaluate the high school programs in the subject areas concerned is even more ridiculous. Yet educators throughout Connecticut continue to use them for those ends.

The CEEB achievements are misnamed, technically. An achievement test is written to measure how well the student has mastered what he has been taught. The "College Boards" are a kind of proficiency test which measure their ability in relation to a completely arbitrary set of objectives and materials. The tests, in fact, may have little relationship to the goals, methods and content of the actual school program. They are designed specifically so as not to give undue weight to any particular kind of program.

A statement was solicited from the Educational Testing Service, the group responsible for administering the College Board Achievement and Listening Comprehension tests, concerning the use of scores to evaluate school programs. Their response was that Achievement Test scores are not appropriate for use in evaluating an individual school's program for several reasons.

> "Because they are designed to provide equal opportunity to candidates from different schools with different curriculums, methods and materials, these tests do not necessarily reflect all the objectives and emphases of any one school. Also, because the general scholastic ability of students varies from one school to another, performance on the Achievement Test will inevitably vary, even with the most effective teaching."*

This statement, in effect, confirms the position that program evaluation and teacher evaluation cannot be accomplished objectively by using the CEEB Achievement Test scores. We must suspect that where this practice continues the individuals who so use the scores are attempting to find evidence to support a bias which they already hold without regard to scientific evaluative techniques.

*College Entrance Examination Board, College Board Score Reports: A Guide for Counselors and Admissions Officers (New York, 1968), p. 50.

FL001865

Part II

There also appears to be general confusion in the profession as to how to use the percentile rank or "norm" tables which are published in the score interpretation material for the foreign language tests. Should a student who began the study of a foreign language in the elementary school or in grade seven be compared to other eleventh or twelfth graders who did not begin their study until grade nine?

The key question here is how the percentile ranks were developed. How is pre-grade-nine foreign language study handled in developing norms? The following questions are answered by all students taking College Board Achievement Tests in foreign languages.

"If your knowledge of _____ does <u>not</u> come almost entirely from high school courses taken in grades 9 through 12, blacken <u>Space 9</u> and leave the remaining spaces blank, regardless of how long you studied the subject in high school. For example, you are to blacken space 9 if much of your knowledge of _____ comes from any of the following sources: study prior to the ninth grade, courses taken at a college, special study, residence abroad, or living in a home in which _____ is spoken.

"If your knowledge of _____ comes almost entirely from courses taken in grades 9 through 12, blacken the one space whose number corresponds to the number of semesters you have studied _____ in these four grades. (Remember that a year in secondary school generally consists of two semesters, each of which is four or five months in length.) If you are studying _____ this semester, count it as one of the semesters.

"If you are in doubt about whether to mark Space 9 rather than one of the spaces 1-8, mark Space 9."

The scores of students who mark Space 9 are not included in the samples which Educational Testing Service uses to derive the percentile rank tables. A similar method is used to form the tables for the Listening Comprehension tests.

Since norms are based on the scores of students who began language study in grade 9 or later, students with previous language study can only gain. Therefore, these students should not hesitate to indicate that a good deal of their knowledge of the language comes from study prior to the ninth grade.

The problem then arises of what part of the norm tables to use in comparing the score of the student who started his foreign language study in grade 3 or grade 7 with similar students across the nation. Obviously this cannot be done using the norms now supplied by the College Board. The only sound way of doing this, at present, is to compare similar students at the local level. Local norms can be built up over a period of years.

> In determining which students are similar, more than the length of time a pupil has studied must be taken into account. Consideration must also be given to the amount of course work which the student has mastered and the ability group in which he has studied.* Although most teachers and counselors will advise that only high achieving students attempt the College Board Achievements, the fact is that some students with average or low achievement in foreign language study do take the exams.

In summary, the position of the Coordinators of Foreign Languages in Connecticut on these questions is:

1. Evaluation of foreign language programs by examination of CEEB Achievement and Listening Comprehension Tests scores is subjective, unscientific and indefensible.

2. The practice of evaluating foreign language teachers by examining the CEEB scores is without sound basis.

3. The student who studies a foreign language prior to grade nine is in no danger of being downgraded because he has studied for a longer time. CEEB norms are based solely on students who begin their study in grade nine or later.

4. Essentially, there is no justification for placing the student with a long sequence anywhere in the published tables since they do not take into account any experience outside of 9 through 12 study.

*For further information on course work, see Kenneth A. Lester, ed., Foreign Languages Grades K-12 (Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education, March 1968), pp. 16-29.